

BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Wednesday 17th December 2025 at 7.00pm.

Present: Councillors: Sue Clarke (Chair), John Bailey, Steven Burch, Sylvee Phillips and Judith Hart (Town Clerk).

In attendance: Cllr Stuart Rogers (Teignbridge District Council and Devon County Council) arrived at 7.30pm and 5 members of the public

Press: None

25/157. Apologies for absence: Cllrs Paul Georghiades and Ben Leaney (Buckfastleigh Town Council) and apologies from Cllr Jack Major (Teignbridge District Council) via Cllr Rogers.

No apologies received from Cllr Ron Fox.

Councillors invited to declare any interests: None

25/158. To approve and sign the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 19th November 2025 and review actions from this meeting:

Minutes signed by Cllr Sue Clarke.

Actions: No actions to discuss

25/159. To receive the minutes of the Finance Committee held on 18th November 2025 and resolve the following recommendation:

- **Minute No. 25/28. To discuss expenditure of the new Community Infrastructure Levy**

Decision: Members agreed that the £1,608.23 Community Infrastructure Levy received in October 2025 should be ring-fenced and carried over to the 2026/27 budget for expenditure on a community asset when required within the set timescale.

25/160. Questions and comments from the public:

A resident asked if there is any further news regarding the planning application for the proposed development at Barn Park? The flooding concerns that have been consistently raised by residents have not been adequately addressed. The spring has been overflowing with recent higher rainfall causing waterlogged gardens.

The Clerk and Councillors are not aware of any updates.

25/161. Response to the proposed changes to Devon Library Service with representation from the Friends of Buckfastleigh Library

Anne Goulborn and Janet Jones as members of the Friends of Buckfastleigh Library gave a summary of the new Devon Library proposals for Totnes and South Devon which will substantially reduce services to all areas. Currently there is a consultation which will run until 23rd February 2026. Residents are encouraged to complete the survey.

It is proposed that the opening hours for Buckfastleigh Library are reduced from 15 hours a

week to only 6 with 3 hours on a Thursday morning and 3 hours on a Saturday morning. This does not coincide with the primary school children who visit after school and does not allow any time for administration work or sorting out book deliveries. The new proposal is completely unworkable and there is no evidence that this reduction has been based on the number of residents who use the library which is very busy and more so during children's events such as the Summer Reading Challenge and other popular activities. Anne has requested usage statistics.

There is also the option for the library to be run by volunteers or even unmanned which poses a significant risk to the Town Hall with regards to safety, fire and insurance liability.

Some of the information that has been circulated is according to Anne Goulborn inaccurate and there is the suggestion that Devon County Council is looking to adopt the Cornwall model where only 4 of the 27 libraries are run by the Council. The other 23 libraries are run by Town and Parish Councils, a community group and a social enterprise. This is yet another cost cutting exercise even though Libraries unlimited raises substantial funds to keep the libraries open.

Member of the Public: Libraries are a free resource which is essential for pre-school and home-schooled children.

The library provides a warm and welcoming space. Reducing the hours is another step towards closure.

Cllr Clarke: This proposal will be very detrimental to the future of Town Hall and may lead to a substantial loss in revenue.

Cllr Bailey: The consultation questions are loaded and refer to the benefits of the new proposals and not the negatives.

Cllr Burch: It is impossible to undervalue the services provided by a librarian.

If the library becomes community managed Libraries Unlimited will no longer exist. Reduced opening hours for the lower band libraries is unfair.

Cllr Clarke: Access to books and computers is very important for students too.

There has been an uptake in reading in recent years, but actual data is needed to support objections.

Cllr Rogers offered to meet with the Friends of Buckfastleigh Library group.

25/162. Questions to District and County Councillors and comments on reports relevant to this meeting:

Cllr Rogers is attending every library meeting held at County Hall.

Representatives of the Dartmoor communities within the Ashburton and Buckfastleigh Ward met with Councillors and senior officers from Devon County Council (DCC), Teignbridge District Council (TDC) and Dartmoor National Park Authority hosted by Cllr Rogers on 28th November 2025. This was an opportunity to highlight the specific concerns of each community and the difficulties that Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) proposals will place on poorly resourced rural communities such as Buckfastleigh.

Cllr Rogers: There needs to be an understanding about the reality of DCC and TDC finances and the amount of debt across Devon.

Cllr Clarke: Despite repeated requests there has still not been a definitive answer regarding the unspent Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) held by TDC or the interest accrued on this. At the above meeting Phil Shears, Chief Executive of TDC confirmed that the CIL reserve is being used against borrowing.

This has raised concerns as to how and why the CIL is being used while TDC continues to let their assets decline from lack of maintenance.

Cllr Rogers explained that LGR will not write off the 1.9 billion Devon debt. 40% of the Teignbridge area lies within the National Park, it is not known how this will work with LGR.

A new UK Town of Culture Fund has been approved but Cllr Rogers is waiting to hear what the application criteria will be.

Funds are still available from the Household Support Fund, and a new fund will be available from April 2026.

Business rates are changing and a workshop will be arranged for businesses to learn more.

The call for new foster carers and support from Buckfastleigh Town Council has been acknowledged at DCC.

The Town Council has still not received any financial information regarding the Woodholme public toilets.

A free survey of the land at Duckspound/Hamlyns playing fields has been commissioned regarding the proposed new scout hut and funding sources are being sought.

25/163. Planning Applications for commercial sites and areas of significant development or interest:

None

25/164. To review the Police Report for November 2025:

No report received.

25/165. To receive the Teignbridge Citizens Advice Buckfastleigh Outreach Activity Report July to September 2025:

Noted

25/166. To discuss and resolve the 2026/27 Budget and Precept:

Three options for the new budget and precept were considered at the Finance Committee meeting held on 18th November 2025 as follows:

Option A (v1) – Budget with annual increases plus an additional £15,000 towards the transfer of one TDC owned asset. This equates to an increase of 16.75% to the budget from £172,250 to £201,100 and would increase the Town Council's portion of the Council Tax by 13.77% to a Band B property at £1.64 per month.

Option B (v2) – Option A together with a cut to the Larger and Smaller Grants budget by 50%. This equates to an increase of 12.01% to the budget from £172,250 to £193,100 and would increase the Town Council's portion of the Council Tax by 9.25% to a Band B property at £1.10 per month.

Option C (v3) – Option A together with the removal of both the Larger and Smaller Grants for a period of 12 months. This equates to an increase of 7.46% to the budget from £172,250 to £185,100 and would increase the Town Council's portion of the Council Tax by 4.72% to a Band B property at 56p per month.

Resolved: Members agreed unanimously to adopt Option B as recommended by members of the Finance Committee. Clerk to action.

25/167. Annual Review of Financial Regulations:

Decision: Adopted unanimously.

25/168. Annual Review of Assets, Risk Assessment, and Internal Control 2025/26:

Decision: All 3 documents adopted unanimously.

25/169. Review of Interim Audit Report 2025/26:

No issues to report. The Clerk was thanked for her work.

25/170. Budget Analysis Report 01.11.25 – 30.11.25:

Noted.

25/171. Bank Payments Report and Bank Statement 01.11.25 – 30.11.25:

Noted.

25/172. Chairs Announcements.

Cllr Clarke attended the recent Wintertide event, W.I Christmas Fair, helped with the running of the children's rides at Buckfastleigh Christmas Fair and visited Redmount residential home as part of her annual Mayoral duties.

25/173. Councillor updates relevant to this meeting.

Cllr Burch was pleased to report the first cinema screening went well and has received positive feedback from the public.

25/174. Items requiring urgent attention.

It was noted that current Town Hall revenue is not enough to meet expenditure to cover the cost of increasing repairs and maintenance, the impact of recent flooding events, utilities and salaries. As the Town Council is the charity trustee the Town Hall Manager has been unable to secure other funding sources and there are no reserves.

Decision: Members agreed that prior to a review of the future of the Town Hall the Town Council will use what is held reserves on behalf of the Town Hall to keep the current situation afloat including the cost of the second roof incident. Resolved unanimously.

25/175. Summary of Key Messages

Clerk to action.

Meeting closed at 9.50pm